Wallace, Claire

"Youth, Citizenship and Social Change". Youth Research Programmes and Research Policy in Britain and Austria

Diskurs 9 (1999) 1, S. 97-102

DISKURS 1/99
ISSN 0937-9614
DM 22.–

DISKURS

Studien zu Kindheit, Jugend, Familie und Gesellschaft

Sexualität und Partnerschaft

Interview

10 Jahre Kinderpolitik in NRW

Spektrum

- Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen
- Geschlecht und Partizipation
- Armut im Kindesalter
- Jugend: eine gesellschaftliche Minderheit
- Grenzen der Erziehungsarbeit

Forschungstrends

- Youth, Citizenship and Social Change
- Der Sonderforschungsbereich 186 der Universität Bremen

inhalt

1/99

DISKURS

editorial

thema

Sexualität und Partnerschaft
Daten und Diskurse

Mit dem Brüchigwerden der alten Verbotsmoral und traditioneller sexueller Verhaltensmuster rücken genuin soziologische Betrachtungsweisen in den Vordergrund. Im Modell sozialen Lernens geraten kommunikative Kompetenzen in den Blick.

Sexualität kann auf vielfältige Weise posieren. Wir haben uns vermutlich zu sehr an ein Kostüm gewöhnt, das längst Uniform geworden ist. Es gibt aber Anhaltspunkte dafür, daß es auf sexuellem Terrain weit mehr gibt: nicht naturgemäß, sondern als Verhandlungssache.

Gesellschaftliche Veränderungen haben nicht nur die ideologischen und wissenschaftlichen Diskurse über Sexualität beeinflußt, sondern auch das sexuelle Verhalten selbst. Welche Konsequenzen hat dieser Wandel für das Gespräch zwischen den Generationen?

Sex auf jedem Sender, nackte Körper in den Medien. Sex in der Jugendkultur. Wie adoleszente Mädchen und Jungen hierzulande mit Sexualität umgehen, welche Einstellungen sie zu Liebe und Partnerschaft haben - Antworten darauf gibt eine empirische Studie.

Wann ist eigentlich der richtige Zeitpunkt für das »erste Mal«? Gibt es den überhaupt? Eine Untersuchung über Verständigungen bei der erotischen Annäherung geht Formen der Abstimmung von Zeitbedürfnissen und Folgen der Zeitwahl in Partnerbeziehungen nach.

interview

spektrum

10 Jahre DISKURS !

Unser Jubiläum und das mit Bedeutungen überladene Jahr 2000 fallen zusammen:

Ein Anlaß, unseren Leserinnen und Lesern zu danken! Gleichzeitig eine Bitte: Schreiben Sie uns per Leserbrief oder E-Mail (diskurs@dji.de), was Ihnen an der Zeitschrift gefällt und mißfällt: Themen? Wissenschafts- und Praxisorientierung? Art der Darstellung? Mehr oder weniger internationale Beiträge? Wir werden Ihre Botschaften im nächsten Heft (auf Wunsch anonym) abdrucken!

forschung kompakt

Claire Wallace

»Youth, Citizenship and Social Change«

Youth Research Programmes and Research Policy in Britain and Austria

Claire Wallace is researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna and Professor of Social Research at the University of Derby, UK.
She has written a number of books and articles about young people, the most recent of which is: Youth and Society. The construction and deconstruction of youth in Eastern and Western Europe. Macmillans Uk and St. Martin's Press USA 1998 (with Siyka Kovatcheva).
She is currently undertaking research on migration, xenophobia and household survival strategies in Eastern and Central Europe.

Address:
Professor Claire Wallace
Department of Sociology
Institute for Advanced Studies
Stumpergasse 56
A-1060 Wien
Österreich
E-Mail: wallace@ihs.ac.at

Der Beitrag beschreibt das Forschungsprogramm »Jugendliche, Bürgerrechte und sozialer Wandel« (»Youth, Citizenship and Social Change«) des Rats für Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung (ESRC) in Großbritannien. Dabei werden die Grundlagen dieser Form programmatischer Förderung in den letzten 15 Jahren aufgezeigt und im Verhältnis zur allgemeinen Forschungsförderung im Vereinigten Königreich betrachtet. Darüber hinaus werden einige Vergleiche zwischen der österreichischen und der britischen Forschungsförderung angestellt.

In the past 15 years, research funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in Britain has been channelled through various research programmes. This is a way of using scarce resources to make the most impact – both academically and politically. The research programmes are the product of a public negotiation process involving different members of the research community as well as the wider public – e. g. business, government, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). Once the outline of the programme is agreed, then it is advertised and researchers in Britain can offer projects which fit the research programme. Because this generates a great number of offers, there is a two stage application process – in the first stage only an outline of the research is required of three pages maximum. If this survives the reviewing process, then the authors are asked to submit a full application which then goes through another reviewing process.

Only about one in 20 of the original applications are finally funded.

There are at present 21 ESRC research programmes accounting for about 20 % of the ESRC funding overall and one of these is about »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change«. This was first advertised in 1997 when there were 215 applications, which were whittled down to 45 teams who were asked to submit full applications. In the end, 15 survived this second stage of the reviewing process. »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change« is a multi-disciplinary programme which aims to respond to the issues raised by the changing nature of »youth« and »youth transitions« in contemporary society and to contemporary academic debates.

Social context of British Youth in the 90s

The labour market for young people in Britain has changed radically. Many jobs formerly open to young people have disappeared and others require increasingly more sophisticated skills. The development of a variety of new training and vocational educational programmes since the 1970s have sought to help young people into jobs but it is not yet clear what the outcomes of many of these reforms will be. At the top end of the youth cohort, increasing numbers are continuing in their studies to university level, so that the number of students has increased very dramatically in recent years. The numbers of universities and varieties of university courses has likewise increased (there are now more than 70 universities in the UK). At the other end of the scale, there is a group of multiply disadvantaged young people at the bottom of the labour market which some refer to as an »underclass«. The debate about this »underclass« (originally imported from the USA) has aroused many strong opinions and has had both an academic and a political impact. Youth crime and youth deviance has been a particular focus of popular attention and this too has served to create a negative image of contemporary youth. Whether or not there is an »underclass« of young people, it is clear that particular groups suffer disproportionate disadvantages – examples would be some Afro-Caribbean and Asian young people, under-qualified young people, young people in particular regions and cities and homeless young people. This is more generally captured by the concept of »social exclusion« which is itself imported from EU funding programmes.

In Britain there has been an on-going debate about citizenship which is reflected in the title and thematic content of this research programme. The debate focuses not upon who is a member of a nation (as in Germany) but rather upon what kind of participation is possible for different members of a national community. One part of the discussion has been around welfare entitlements, following the earlier work of T. H. Marshall (1950). Welfare entitlements and social benefits have been quite radically cut for young people in Britain during the 1980s. Young people have been pushed back onto the support of their families and in some cases families are also unable to support them. For students, loans are available to help them pay off their education for which they now have to pay fees. Other benefits are also paid in the form of loans. This can mean that they are saddled with debt for many years after they finish studying and might postpone family transitions longer.

The citizenship debate has therefore been partly about how young people should be supported through all their lengthy and complex transitions. In what ways should the state, the family or young people themselves contribute? Another part of the citizenship debate (initiated by Mrs. Thatcher) is less about what people can expect from the state than about what they contribute to the state. What kind of political and civic participation is expected from young people and how can they contribute to political processes, given that they are not likely any more to be workers or trade unionists – some of the traditional channels of influence. It is possible that although young people are not much interested in conventional politics, they are active in a range of alternative kinds of social movements – campaigns for animal rights, against motorway extensions and so on. For this reason the meaning of citizen involvement has been broadened.

It was in this context that four main themes were formulated as part of the ESRC »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change« programme:

- Social participation and citizenship: This theme features studies of the extent of young people's involvement in both conventional politics and in alternative campaigning activities, and the role played by this engagement in their understanding of »citizenship«.

- Shaping transitions and biographies: These studies examine the role of a range of structural, personal and cultural factors in the shaping of young people's transitions to adulthood, throwing light on processes of social inclusion and social exclusion.

- Vulnerable groups: Detailed studies of a variety of highly disadvantaged groups will examine the diverse pathways by which young people become socially excluded, or rather resist social exclusion.

- The social construction of identities: The role of traditional factors such as family and work alongside media, culture, consumerism and life-styles in the construction of social identities for young people.

The »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change« programme runs from 1998 to 2002 and has fifteen linked projects, costing 2.3 million Pounds Sterling. It is directed by Dr. Liza Catan at the University of Sussex, whose job it is to co-ordinate the whole programme, arrange communications and exchanges of information between the different research teams and to help to make links between their work and the wider public. One feature

of the programme is the effort to include young people themselves as consultants, as advisory groups and as researchers in an imaginative and sensitive way. It was also intended to make the research taking place in Britain comparable with trends in other parts of Europe, although only three projects are explicitly comparative.

In relations between this new programme and youth research traditions in Britain

The »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change« programme follows from the »16-19 Initiative« which finished in 1991 and was directed by John Bynner, London. This in itself was following from the Young People and Society programme of the early 1980s. These former programmes focused mostly upon the transition from school to work and upon the 16-19 age group, which was believed, at that time, to be the most problematical. As the transition into work was believed to be most problematical, it was the focus of the Youth Cohort Studies, too. This was at the time of rising youth unemployment and the collapse of the youth labour market, so there were both scientific and policy concerns about what would happen to young people. However, whilst the previous research was criticised for being fragmented, the »16-19 Initiative« aimed to correct this by being a directed programme of research which would be multi-area and multi-disciplinary. Consequently, six people were invited to tender for parts of a co-ordinated survey which would be longitudinal, involving two cohorts of young people who were followed over a period of two years. In addition to this core study, there were associated studies which looked at issues which were missing in the core study – for example, a special survey of ethnic minority youth was commissioned and another of youth in rural areas. These associated studies were open to tender. At that time, the main theoretical issues were concerned with agency and structure, with area studies (selecting a location and studying it in some detail rather than drawing a cross-national sample) and with youth training and unemployment.

Different career »trajectories« were identified by the research. The research used ideas from social psychology as much as from sociology and here the focus was upon youth identities. Although the core study was a survey, there were a number of qualitative and ethnographic studies associated with the Initiative. The »16-19 Initiative« was evaluated, both by the key participants and by an independent evaluation review; part of the impetus for the new initiative came out of this review.

By the 1990s, the youth issue had shifted in Britain. It no longer seemed as though 16-19 were the most significant age group in terms of youth transitions. Rather, it was necessary to focus upon a longer age span: from 15-25. This would encompass a range of life transitions, not just into work. Fewer and fewer young people were entering work from school in any case, so the transition from school to work was a more extended process. Young people were more likely to enter training programmes or education or even parallel careers, outside the formal labour market. Youth cultures were no longer Saturday night escapism for working class youth, but something which shaped youth life-styles and consumption more generally. The idea of »youth« was being reconceptualised, as its boundaries and meaning were no longer clear.

The new youth programme, which was named »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change«, should therefore cover a wider age range and a wider range of issues. The problem youth were no longer those who went into unskilled work, but those who did not succeed to make other kinds of life transitions, thus becoming dependent upon their families as the benefits for young people were systematically taken away and by having non-standard family transitions. Extra-marital childbearing was increasingly common as was cohabitation rather than marriage. The dark side of these incomplete or unsuccessful transitions was witnessed in rising suicide, homelessness and drug use along with careers outside the formal labour market in the informal economy. The new youth programme »Youth Citizenship and Social Change« focusses upon these kinds of issues and is also inspired by continental models of youth in countries such as Germany, where life transitions are studied in a more general way. Furthermore, new intellectual concepts have come to the fore, including citizenship and social exclusion – although agency and structure continue to be part of the theoretical framework.

The ideas for the programme were formulated by John Bynner and presented at a Conference at the University of Glasgow which included a number of youth researchers not just from the British research community, but from Germany and Scandinavia as well. The outcome of this conference was the book »Youth, Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context« (edited by John Bynner, Lynne Chisholm and Andy Furlong in 1997) which was intended to lay the intellectual foundations for a new approach to youth in Britain.

However, the mode of organising research initiatives (now called »Programmes«) within the ESRC had changed. Instead of being a directed body of research for which a targeted group of people were invited to tender, the invitation to tender was thrown open completely. The programme was advertised and anyone could submit projects to fit the rather broad research remit. The criteria for selecting projects was based entirely upon the academic quality of the project, as rated by the independent academic referees' comments which were put together as a 7-point scale. This meant that the final cluster of projects did not necessarily relate to each other and did not necessarily fulfil the remit of the programme as originally conceived. Some topics were left uncovered – in particular comparative European research was not covered in the programme in any systematic way, nor was there much material on

the family, although this was a fundamental concern for those who originally framed the programme. Other topics which were rather remote from the original conception did find a way in and thus shifted the programme in a different direction.

Management and dissemination of the research

The management of such a research programme is different from that of the »16-19 Initiative«. The current Director, Liza Catan, has the difficult task of trying to bring together the disparate projects conducted by research teams in different universities often with different disciplinary backgrounds and to give them some coherence. Her task is also to publicise the projects and to make the links with policy-makers, industry and other potential »users« of the research. For this reason, a significant part of the total budget is devoted to such kinds of co-ordination. To understand the importance of this, it is necessary to take the current funding philosophy of the ESRC into account.

The current policy of the ESRC places an emphasis upon »users« of the research and »user friendly dissemination to different groups«. This was one of the criteria, alongside the academic ones, by which project proposals were judged. It is the current policy of the ESRC to demonstrate the usefulness and relevance of social research and to provide »value for money«. This policy of the ESRC comes from its mission in 1993 which requires it contribute towards British economic prosperity and competitiveness, to the quality of life and to the evaluation of public policies. This reflects the fact that although the ESRC is an independent academic body it receives its money from the state budget and forms a part of the Department of Trade and Industry at a Ministerial level. The Royal Charter encouraged a stronger relationship between research and public than had hitherto been the case through having 50 % of the Governing Council composed of senior people drawn from the academic community and 50 % from the »wider community«, including business, NGOs, policy makers and so on. This wider community of potential »users« is also drawn at every stage through the reviewing of funding proposals, the way in which research is carried out and the evaluation of the research output and reports at the end of the process. Although this was resisted at first by some academics in Britain, who felt that research should be driven only by academic goals, it has over a period of time affected the behaviour of British researchers, partly because of the very competitive research environment.

One particular emphasis of the programme is that of incorporating the ideas and activities of young people into the programme as »users«. This is done in a variety of ways. In some projects, young people are trained as researchers, active in the research process itself. In other projects there are groups of young people who act as on-going consultants to the projects. A further way in which young people are brought in is via NGOs, such as the British Youth Council, which has been concerned to filter young people's views and experiences through to policy makers. This reflects the general ESRC research policy as described earlier.

Comparison with other EU countries: the case of Austria

Although not all research has been carried out in this way in Britain, two thirds of the ESRC Research budget is accounted for by directed research. One third is still left for the »response mode« of research – that is, the open competition for research proposals on any topic. Youth studies are also funded under this. In Austria, by contrast, not much research funding comes through the Austrian Science Fund (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung »FWF«) which funds only the salaries of unemployed young researchers for two years at a time, rather than research projects as such. These are independently evaluated through a peer review process. Small grants also come from the Charitable Fund of the National Bank on a purely competitive basis rather than taking into account any kind of research policy.

Whilst in the UK 50 % of all research money is derived from these »earmarked funds« outside of universities, in Austria this is only 14 % (Felderer and Campbell 1994). In the UK the proportion of funding derived from earmarked funds (both public and private sources) now has increased to 64 % of all funding (Felderer and Campbell 1998). Most earmarked social science funding in Austria comes through the Ministry of Science (BMfWV / Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Verkehr) or other Ministries and is not usually evaluated through a peer review process. This money is directly controlled by the Ministry and therefore ultimately by the Minister him- or herself, a politician. Thus the research tends much more to reflect the goals and priorities of politicians and policy makers in the first place. The research funding is generally allocated through a dense network of personal and political links between Ministers, civil servants and individual researchers, which is due to the relatively small community. The gap between the academic community and the policy making community is not so wide as in Britain, although at the price of less independent research. Researchers who want to be funded have to spend a lot of time persuading politicians and key civil servants about the worthiness of their projects rather than openly tendering for projects. There is little concern to reflect the needs of the »wider community«, as in Britain, since earmarked research is state-driven.

In an attempt to tackle this kind of bias recently, the Social Science section of the Austrian Ministry of Science decided to set up research programmes which would be open to public tender and subject to independent referees' judgements. This was the case with the programme for research on »Xenophobia« which was initiated in 1994 and, for the first time, was co-

What kind of participation is possible for different members of a national community?

ordinated by an independent office rather than the Ministry itself. An important role for this co-ordination bureau is the public dissemination of the research through newspaper articles, TV, radio etc. rather than giving academic direction. Under this programme 30 projects were funded from an original application list of 118. It includes a questionnaire to which a number of different research teams contributed as well as some emphasis on comparative research through two of the projects. Since altogether 60-70 people are working on this project, this has made a major impact on the research activities of social scientists in Austria. However, on account of funding cuts, the programme which followed, »Women in Higher Education«, was severely curtailed and it is not clear that any new research programme will follow. The current policy of the Ministry of Science is to assist with applications for research money at the EU level, rather than relying upon »home« research. It would be possible to say therefore, that in Austria earmarked social science research is perhaps too much policy directed and tends to reflect the whims or ambitions of politicians and civil servants rather than academic pressures or the need to demonstrate value for money and responsiveness to the wider community.

Whilst Austrian social science is perhaps too policy directed, in Britain there was a deep gap between academic research and policy makers/politicians. This gap has been filled to a certain extent by »Think Tanks«. The »Think Tanks« are independent but do reflect different political orientations. Thus, many of the ideas of Mrs. Thatcher on privatisation, competition, the market model of public funding which we have been describing in the British academic environment, were born in »Think Tanks« such as the Adam Smith Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Centre for Policy Studies in Britain and in the USA. The New Labour ideas also come through »Think Tanks« such as DEMOS and IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research). These »Think Tanks« can respond much more rapidly than academic researchers to new ideas (although their ideas are often drawn from academic researchers in the first place), can air quite radical or outrageous ideas which politicians would not dare to articulate and liase between the mainstream research community, the »lunatic fringe«, politicians and policy makers. Furthermore, they are sponsored from private sources, industry, business, charities, NGOs etc. rather than being dependent upon state funding.

To understand the differences between Britain and Austria it is also necessary to understand the different role of universities. Professors appointed under the Humboldt tradition are responsible for teaching but are independent as to what they teach or research. They have jobs for life. Until now, they have not been under pressures of evaluation and are not required to raise additional money to supplement university funding. This could well be changing however. Thus, 1989/90 86 % of research money in Austria went to universities in the form of direct funding transfers, whilst this figure was less than 50 % for the UK (Felderer and Campbell 1994). Much research therefore takes place in Institutes and offices outside of the universities, since these places are under pressure to supplement their incomes with research funding and are evaluated in this way. Examples would be the Institut für Höhere Studien (Institute for Advanced Studies) in Vienna. For this reason, the independent research institutes are very keen to demonstrate their usefulness to the wider community and to maintain a prominent media profile. It is significant therefore that only a small number of the projects on the »Xenophobia« programme were done through universities. Most were carried out by researchers at independent research institutes.

In Britain, universities have been subject to evaluations and are under intense pressure to raise research money in order to finance university research. There was a deliberate policy (during the 1980s and 1990s) to reduce the direct funding transfer of research money to universities and to put it instead into the ESRC, from where it would be selectively allocated. Universi-

ties can receive 40 % in overheads from ESRC grants and increasingly, research money at universities is brought in this competitive way. As a result of the Research Assessment Exercise, the funding for each university depends directly upon the amount of research money they attract as well as research »output« in terms of publications. If people fail to measure up to this evaluation, Departments can be closed and staff made redundant.
On the other hand, specialists who bring research funding can have very attractive job offers as Universities outbid each other in attempts to »headhunt« academic stars and this has been a major source of mobility of University personnel in recent years.

Thus, although the money allocated to social science through earmarked funding has increased, so has the competition for it. An indication of the degree of competition for research grants is shown in the fact there are usually about 300 applications for 15 or so projects – a success rate of 5 % compared with 30 % in Austria in the »Xenophobia« programme and 50 % in the FWF. Universities are given a score, and this score affects their prestige as well as their funding. British researchers have also increasingly directed their attention towards Brussels and the fact that British Universities are over-represented in EU projects is a reflection of this kind of pressure which British academics are under. Britain has introduced the most evaluation and review into academic research of any European country, although this reviewing process is also starting to make an impact upon other European countries – most notably, the Netherlands and in Scandinavia. In Austria there has been considerable reluctance to introduce review and evaluation of research activities in Universities (Felderer and Campbell 1998).

Advantages and disadvantages of the ESRC model

The advantage of this kind of programme directed research is that it is one way of making research responsive to what are felt to be public needs in an atmosphere where there is increasing scrutiny of public expenditure. Thus, they draw upon existing knowledge, but also forge new knowledge frontiers and push research in that direction. They have the advantage that they are able to co-ordinate and disseminate a range of research on a given topic. They are cross-disciplinary and strictly time limited – usually up to five years. They reflect a coherent research policy which is open to public competition at all stages, with a heavy emphasis on academic quality.

The disadvantage is that there is some cross-pressure between the straightforward academic goals (to do basic research, write books, publish in learned journals, present at academic conferences etc.) and the need to show that one is in touch with policy makers, business and the wider community. This wider community does not, in fact, have much interest in academic research.

We could say therefore, that whilst in Austria research (not teaching) is too much policy (or politically) directed and the problem is to introduce more independent research, in Britain the problem has been how to make independent research bodies and the academic community more responsive to public needs. Whilst in Austria the research funding often lacks independence and peer review quality evaluation, in Britain the increasing competition due to evaluation has lead to tremendous pressure on academics who need to constantly apply for new research and to demonstrate their output by »publish or perish« methods. It has also lead to differentiation between those people who concentrate primarily on research and those who are not successful in research and therefore work mainly as teachers. Because in Britain most of the research takes place within the University sector, this is also reflected in the prestige ranking of Universities for which »leagues« are emerging, rather like in the USA.

Thus, although the ESRC and Universities are independent academic bodies, the intense competitive pressures which Universities and academics are under means that researchers are required to conform to funding policies. In Austria where Universities are not (yet) under this evaluative pressure and enjoy the security of their high amount of direct transfer research funding, they are more free to follow their research priorities. However, on the other hand, they are not accountable to the wider community or required to demonstrate their efficiency in return for public money. As public money comes increasingly under scrutiny, this probably will change in the near future.

Literature

Bynner, John / Chisholm, Lynne / Furlong, Andy (Eds.): Youth, Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context. Aldershot, Vermont 1997

Felderer, Bernhard / Campbell, David, F. J.: Forschungsfinanzierung in Europa. Trends, Modelle Empfehlungen für Österreich. Wien 1994

Felderer, Bernhard / Campbell, David F. J.: The Evaluation of Academic Research in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Finland and Switzerland. Patterns and Policies IHS Projektbericht Juli 1998 (A summary is also available on the IHS webpage.)

Marshall, T. H.: Citizenship and Social Class and other Essays. Cambridge 1950

For further information about the ESRC programme, please contact Dr. Liza Catan, Director, ESRC Youth Research Programme, Trust for the Study of Adolescence, 23 New Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1WZ, UK, Phone: +44-1273-818695, Fax: +44-1273-679907, E-Mail: lcatan@pavilion.co.uk